CHAPTER-VII

MILITARY STRATEGY

It has unassuredly been remarked that war was a passion with the Rajputs. But as these passionate wars were the results of an organised effort, the stratagem can not be ignored as their essential feature. Their strategy emphatically formed one of the important subjects of the contemporary Indian (Sanskrit) sources, though, they speak of it in a retrospective manner. The eyewitnessed narrations of the Muslim historians, even if, sometimes, safeguarding their patrons and race, also provide some clues relating to it. Thus, a combined explanation of both Indigenous and foreign (Persian) accounts will expectedly reveal a much transparent illustration of various aspects of military strategy of the Rajputs, such as the modes and tactics to deal with the enemy’s forces, creating harm to their troops with appliance of some unlawful apprehensions, arrangement of troops in a wisely manner on the battlefield and various other maneuverable devices, practiced for winning over the enemy in course of a war.

Anyhow, the idea of strategic wars did not evolve out at once. It may exactly be traced back to the period of Mahabharata War.\(^1\) An astute politician like Kautilya could assess the significance of a strategic device, while passing the eloquent statement that “an arrow discharged by an archer may kill one person or may not kill (even one) but the intellect operated by a wise man could kill even children in the womb.”\(^2\) He advises the king with great force to adopt

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1 *Mahabharata* for the first time gives a bewildering account of different battle-arrays (vyuhas) like *suchi* (needle shaped), *krauncha* (in the shape of a heron), *syena* (hawk array) *makara* (crocodile shaped), *mandala* (circular) *vajra* (thunderbolt) etc., (See the formation of vyuhas in *Udyoga, Virata* and *Bhishma* parvas), which facilitated all the possible kinds of movements of the armies. The references of war music for rousing the spirit of combatants, striking terrors and wishing victories are also found extant in it. (*Samkshipta Mahabharatam* (with text and tr.) Part-II, ed. Prabhunath Dwivedi, pp.365 (V.35) and 390 (V.204).

strategical devices against the enemy during the course of war.\(^3\) Focusong on the strategical means, he advises the king "to strike terror in the enemy with the machines, by the employment of occult practices, through assassins, slaying those engaged in something else, by magical arts, by (a show of) association with divinities, through carts, by frightening with elephants, by rousing the treasonable, through herds of cattle, by setting fire to camps, by attacks on tips and in the rear, by creating dissensions through agents appearing as messengers (saying), "your fort has been burnt down or captured, a revolt by a member of your family has broken out; or, your enemy or a forest chieftain has risen (against you)".

Kamandaka, a political writer of c. 8th century was again a great believer of trickery in war. He lays down to the destruction of enemy even by unfair and immoral means and instructs the king to adopt *mantra-yuddha* (secret war), avoiding open warfare and to conduct nocturnal raids against the enemy, as it will require limited efforts for success.\(^4\) Somdeva Suri (10th century), the author of *Nitivakyamrita*, believes in winning over the relatives of enemy for vanquishing him as a greatest secret formulae.\(^5\) These checkmated relatives should also be inspired to rebel against their king, in his view.\(^6\) Tilakmanjari of Dhanpala (10th century) also refers about *sauptikayuddha* (secret war).\(^7\) *Agni Purana* lays down that a king should always endeavour to achieve success through all possible means, i.e., *sama* (the use of friendly

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3 Ibid., p.458, VV.48-50.
4 *Nitisara*, tr. Sisir Kumar Mitra, pp.393, (VV.15-17) and 409 (VV.66-67).
5 "न दायादाय: पचङ्गकः गणान्तरसितः"  
 (*Nitivakyamrita*, p.305, Ch.30, V.65.)
6 "प्रभुभिकोऽक्षतास्यायः दायादायसयः ।"  
 (Ibid., V.66.)
measures), *danam* (the payment of money), *bheda* (creating dissensions among the allies of an adversary), *danda* (war), *maya* (stratagem or treachery), *upeksha* (indifference) and *indrajalam* (deceit). Vishnudharmottara Purana, too, provides instructions for waging a treacherous battle to punish the sinful. In view of Sukra, stratagem is that tool by which even a strong enemy could easily be subdued. In his words, “a king whose arrangements are not certain, looking out for the opportune time, should practise duplicity. Like the concealed eye of a crow, he should pretend one thing and seise another.” Like Kamandaka, he also tries to animate the king to distract the enemy’s ministers, generals, subjects and women from his side by sowing seeds of contrivance among them. A king, according to him, should aim victory by means of creating dissensions in hostile army through expensive gifts and deceiving the rest of army at night, while asleep and tired by watches.

However, almost, all these authorities besides referring about such tactics of *kutayuddha* did not forget to state a few words on the patrimonial wars of India (*dharmayuddha*) as described earlier in _Mahabharata_. But it must be remembered that these and similar other references are

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10 *Sukraniti*, p.176, V.28.  
11 Ibid., p.176, V.23.  
12 Ibid., p.177, V.30.  
13 Ibid., p.181, VV.86-88.  
14 The ethical code relates to the non killing of a person, who is alighted on the ground, who is emasculated, who has joined his hands as suppliants, one who sits with dishevelled hair or one who submits by saying, “I am thine”, one who is asleep, one without a coat of mail, a naked, an unarmed, a combatant who is looking on, one who is fighting with another, one who is drinking or eating, one engaged in another matter, one who is frightened, or one who is running away, an old man, a child, a woman and a king (*Mahabharata*, *anti Parva*, Skt. text with Hindi tr.), ed. by Pt. Sri Damodar Satvalekar, I, pp.510 (VV.12 & 13) and 533, (VV.24-26), Part-II of the same 1980, p.700, VV.13 and 14. Also see *Sukraniti*, op.cit., pp.180 (VV.76-79) and the quotations of Manu in Laxmidhar’s *Rajdharmakanda of Kritya Kalpataru*, p.132).
just runningly quoted by them from the earlier texts in context to dharmayuddha, which was practically never followed by the Indian kings.

However, taking such references as literally, scholars generally remark\(^{\text{15}}\) that the Indian kings including the Rajputs of our age staunchly believed in righteous wars instead of strategical devices, which led to their ultimate defeat against their Arab and Turkish adversaries. Besides this, the omission of Kutayuddha by Laxmidhara (12\(^{\text{th}}\) century AD), the minister of war and peace of the Gahadawala king Govindachandra in his Rajdharamakanda of Krityakalpataru and his emphasis on righteous war led to the opinion of scholars that the Rajput rulers in general and the Gahadawalas in particular were followers of dharmayuddha. Instead of the king, he prescribes, the full knowledge of military strategy to senapati or commander in chief and totally forbids a secret and unrighteous war to the former.\(^{\text{16}}\)

But it seems that strikingly they failed to draw their attention to the fact that Laxmidhara was writing on rajdharma, "the righteousness of the king" and therefore, it was totally irrelevant to mention its reverse. It, therefore, does not imply that they did never follow the policy of kutayuddha. (unrighteous war). Secondly, the account of Laxmidhara is not of original nature but just a compilation of quotations of many ancient authorities like Manu, Yajnyavalkya, Narada etc. Again, in an age of internecine wars, imbued with personal hatred and jealousy among the Indian kings, it was not possible to follow the age old maxims of dharmayuddha. There is no dearth of instances in historical sources when treachery was not used in wars. It is for example well known that Prithviraja III led a night attack on Dharavarsha Paramara of Abu, the description of which is found in Parthaparakramavyayoga of Dharavarsha’s younger brother


Prahaladana. Jayasimha Siddharaja, being unsuccessful after the continuous fight of twelve years against the Paramara kings, Yasovarman and Naravarman ultimately resorted to treachery and won the victory by breaking the southern gateway of Dhara city, which was the weakest point, avoiding an open warfare. Nitivayamrita of Somdeva Suri, too, refers to one Bhadra, who captured the city of Kanchi with the help of warriors holding swords in the guise of hunters. It is further evident that Narasimha Chalukya, the commander of Rastrakuta king, Indra III, in course of his battle against the Pratihara king, Mahipala secured the victory by capturing his champion elephants, which marched in front and putting to flight the rest of troops.

In some rare cases, they also tried to play the treacherous game with the Muslims. Firishta accounts that when Mahmud of Ghazni set out on expedition in order to conquer the fort of Kalanjar, which was under the control of the Chandella king, Vidyadhara, the latter “in order to put the bravery of the Sultan’s troops to the test, intoxicated the elephants with drugs and let them loose without riders in to the camp.” It seems quite appropriate to assume that what Firishta had called the object of Vidyadhara, ‘to test the bravery of the Sultan’s troops’ was certainly a treachery planned by him to create a cohesion in enemy’s camp, the failure of which as proved by the same account is another matter. Gardizi points out to the indecisiveness of Mahmud’s battle with Vidyadhara on account of latter’s retreat under cover of night taking

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17 Dashrath Sharma, *Rajasthan through the Ages*, I, p.291; *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, p.76. Also see, B.N.S. Yadav, op.cit., p.212.
19 Nitivayamrita, op.cit., p.174, V.27.
away the horses and elephants.\textsuperscript{22} Mahmud, thereafter gave up all idea of further advance into Chandella’s territory and promptly returned back to Ghaznin.\textsuperscript{23} Treachery was also not unknown throughout ancient India prior to our age. Such events are well known to us.\textsuperscript{24}

Coming to the arrangement of troops on the battlefield, it may rightly be asserted that the old ideology of \textit{vyuha} persisted as a tradition but certainly was not followed in practice. Though, their various formations are mentioned by almost all the writers dealing with political history of the period.\textsuperscript{25} The practical existence of a complexed \textit{vyuha} strategy\textsuperscript{26} during early medieval period remains suspectable. The period of the Rajputs is generally marked with such defensive

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} R.G. Mishra, \textit{Indian Resistance to Early Muslim Invaders upto AD 1206}, p.47, also see Zainul Akhbar, Cf. S.R. Sharma in \textit{Studies in Medieval Indian History}, pp.27-28.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., R.G. Mishra, op.cit., p.47.
\item \textsuperscript{24} It was also adopted by our ideal heroes, Rama, Krishna, Indra and others and Bali and Vaman were killed by unfair fights. It is widely known that Bhima killed his enemy Duryodhana in a dwell, violating the rules of \textit{Dharmasasra}, at the instance of lord Krishna. That this trend continued throughout Mauryan period can be proved by many examples. Even, further, Chandragupta II is known to have disguised himself as Dhruvadevi, the queen of his elder brother Ramagupta, to get entry into the Saka camp in order to kill the Saka monarch. Similarly, Sasanka of Bengal, acting as an ally of Malava king enticed Rajyavardhan, the king of Thanesar, by fair promise to a conference and assassinated him by treachery.
\item \textsuperscript{25} A detailed description of battle -arrays is found for the first time in \textit{Mahabharata} (See the \textit{Udyoga, Virata and Bhishma Parvas}). Further Kautitya’s treatment to the division of these battle arrays seems more rational and fuller (\textit{Arthasasra}, op.cit., Book 10, concerning war). Their validity is also confirmed by Kamandaka in his \textit{Nitisar} (\textit{Vyuavikalpa}, p.423, V.24). Regarding the exigencies of situation necessitating the formations of different \textit{vyuhas}, \textit{sukra} states that if the alarm rises in the front, the \textit{senapati} should march in an array resembling a crocodile, a double winged hawk or a needle with a strong point, if alarm rises in the rear, what is called a cart, if on the flanks, a thunderbolt, if on all sides, a wheel. (\textit{Sukraniti}, op.cit., p.174, VV.96-97). A vivid description of these \textit{vyuhas} is also found in \textit{Manasollasa} of Somesvara, (Vol.I, \textit{Vimsati} II, VV.1184-89), \textit{Agni Purana}, (pp.844, 876-79) and \textit{Nitiprakasika} (B.P. Mazumdar, op.cit., p.64).
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Agni Purana} refers to seven divisions of a \textit{vyuha} (op.cit., p.876), while \textit{Manasollasa} mentions about nine divisions viz., \textit{mukha}, \textit{praurasyam}, \textit{pratigraha}, \textit{kakshau}, \textit{prakakshau}, \textit{pakshau}, \textit{prapakshau} and \textit{prastham}, (Vol.I, p.135 \textit{Vimsati} II, VV.1178-81).
\end{itemize}
wars, while the invaded king could not get a suitable opportunity for the efficient organisation of their composite forces.

Besides the references of *vyuha* formations, some other implicit details about the battle formations are also furnished by our sources. It relation to it, Kamandaka advises the placement of commander in chief in the midst of expert warriors (*pravira purusha*) fighting bravely and guarding one another. Ordinary soldiers, according to him, should be placed in the middle or central division of a formation and the war machines in the rear part. He views that in case of a fierce confusion in the formation of an array, mighty elephants should be placed in the front, meaningly, the infantry and cavalry should take place behind the war elephants. His advisement to the separate arrangement of infantry, cavalry and elephant forces, with a sufficient gap in between to avoid a clash or obstruction at the time of their movement or retreat, most probably suggests the system of phalanaxes of different wings of army.

The author of *Agni Purana* lays down the adjustment of swordsmen in front of the army followed by the bowmen then cavalry, car warriors and lastly, the elephant-men. The bravest of the footmen elephant-men, car warriors and cavalry soldiers, according to him, should command the front of their respective lines.

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27 *Nitisara*, op.cit., p.426, VV.32-34.
29 The particular distance, according to Kamandaka between each of the foot soldier should be one *sama* (14 angulas), with horses each at an interval of three *samas* and elephants and chariots at an interval of five *samas* each. (Ibid(119,708),(908,999), pp.423, V.23).
30 *Agni Purana*, op.cit., p.845.
31 Ibid., Kautilya also suggests to the placement of best troops in the front, the next best at the ends, the third best in the rear and the weak troops in the centre (*Arthasastra*, op.cit., p.448, V.46). In a mixed composition of horses, elephants and chariots, he prescribes the stationing of elephants at the end of army, horses on the flanks, chariots in the centre or front and foot-soldiers in the wings or sides (Ibid., p.448, VV.38-46).
Manasollasa, giving an enumerative account of the arraying of soldiers on the battleground states that in the rear, centre and flanks should be stationed men with swords, in prapaksha (extremity of a wing), those armed with kodanda (rodbearers) in pahsah (wings), those armoured men and cavalry in puratah (vanguard), cavalry, infantry and in front, elephants. Chandesvara, however, provides for the placement of horses on flanks, those of chariots by the side of the horses and then of elephants followed by infantry. The author of Nitivakyamrita, on the other hand, highly recognises the significance of pratigraha (rear forces) in an army and requires the place of the king in the rear of it with the royal emblem in the front.

The above details revealed from various sources suggest that there was an absence of uniformity in adoption of strategy and the organisation of troops in general. Different dynastic clans probably had the tendency to organise the various components of their army in war, in accordance with their own convenience.

However, it is important to know that to what extent the above laid down rules were being followed in practice. Therefore, in order to find out the real situation, one must go into the details of some important battles of the age, provided by the Persian sources.

33 Rajnitiratnakara, Text, p.40.

A study of our sources in general reveals that the use of chariots had become obsolete in the contemporary wars. The account of chariots within the formation of troops provided by Chandesvara and the author of Agni Purana, thus, appears traditional (For details see Chapter 3).

34 Nitivakyamrita, op.cit., pp.297, (V.19) and 298 (V.21).
35 Ibid., p.298, V.20. Agni Purana also advises the king to remain in the rear for the safety of his life (op.cit., p.844).
Chachnamah (8th century) portrays a very clear picture that Dahar, the ruler of Sind, while arranging his troops to fight with the Arabs, "led out the whole of his army. Some elephants, he sent with the advance column. The central forces he collected round himself. He placed in his front armed foot-soldiers and archers and on his left, armed horsemen with naked swords". The same work also quotes the case of king Maharat of Chittor, who divided his army in to the centre, the right wing, the left wing and the advance guard, while fighting against Rai Chach of Sind. Prithvirajraso refers that once Prithviraj III made five divisions of his army after receiving the news of Mohd. Ghori's army with five divisions. Though, the authenticity of Raso is not far from question as none of our sources adds any information regarding the maintenance of reserve forces (the 5th division) by the Rajputs like the Turks. Such a division of army in to four wings was probably made in order to set tunes with the Arab and Turkish forces, which usually had these four divisions on the ground of fighting, while a fifth division of reserve forces was kept secure for the surprised attack on the harassed enemy or to assist the four fighting wings in critical circumstances.

Generally, the elephants were placed on the advanced guard or frontline, while the king commanded the centre or front of the army, sitting on a lofty howdah with royal emblem.

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37 Ibid., p.21.
40 In the battle of Waihind (AD 1008), the course of the battle had ultimately changed in the side of Mohmedans, when the elephant of Anandpala due to the naphtha balls and flights of arrows directed against it, came to fury and created a havoc in Hindu army (Tarikh-i-Firishta, op.cit., p.27). Similarly, in the battle of Chandwar, the face of victory had turned, while Jayachandra seated on a lofty howdah received a deadly wound from an arrow and fell from his exalted seat to the earth (Tajul Maasir in Elliot & Dowson, Vol.II, Allahabad, p.223).
Nevertheless, such a display of the king heavily costed his life as it helped the adversaries to pinpoint their target on the leader of the forces and thus dishearten the rest of the army. The Indian kings also committed a blunder by stacking at the lives of themselves and their best generals, while placing them on front to counteract the frontal attack on enemy’s forces. The Paramara king Rai Mahlak Deo was not going apart from this tradition, while fighting against the forces of Ain-ul-Mulk by rendering his dear son in front with enormous multitude of forces, which in words of Amir Khusrau, contributed to his fall.\(^41\)

Still, it appears that the Hindus had not revived the old system of their military organisation. That they greatly renewed it after the arrival of the Muslims is very much clear from the following remarks of the Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang on the Indian military organisation in the first half of the 7th century. He states: “A leader in car warrior gives the command... The general of the forces remains in the chariot, he is surrounded by a file of guards, who keeps close to his chariot wheels. The cavalry spread themselves infront to resist an attack... The infantry by their quick movement contributed to defence. They carry a long spear and advance to the front with impetuosity”\(^42\).

Such a reorganisation of forces was an intense necessity probably to keep a pace with the Muslim forces. It seems quite relevant that in absence of practised mounted archery, owing to the technological reluctantness, the Hindus did never allow their cavalry charges to command the front of the army, nor to their barest armed foot soldiers. Instead of it, they liked to place their unwieldy, cumbersome and hardest elephants on the front in order to bear the smashing blows

\(^{41}\) *Khaza ’inul Futuh*, of Amir Khusrau, tr. by Mohd. Habib, p.45.

of expert Turkish mounted archers. No other option was open to them in case of their hamperedness in mounted archery.

In Indian context, the commencement of war had taken place in such a manner that foot soldiers dashed against foot soldiers, horsemen against horsemen, elephants against elephants. Under some circumstances, the soldiers were found to take recourse of hand to hand fight avoiding the weaponry war.

The military camp was also established at a site taking into consideration its strategic importance. There was a provision regarding the encampment of an area with defensive height which is as high as the height of a man, with scarce habitation, having entrance and exit of a very few persons only and provided with a front space for a large tent. Besides, the river banks were usually regarded as good camping grounds owing to the easy availability of water and the safety of the site against the enemy’s attack from atleast one or two sides. Such a site would have


44 At once Visaldev Chauhan and Baluk Rao Chalukya are recorded to have fought a terrible dwell. (*IA, 1872, p.276*). *Naisadhiyacharita* refers that “the army of Nala, the repository of many a sword, both indeed, thrive with hand to hand fights” (B.N.S. Yadav, op.cit., p.213). The similar references of hand to hand fight are found in *Sisupalvadh* of Magha, *Tilakmanjari, Kathasaritsagar* and *Dvasrayakavya* (Ibid.). *Prabandhacintamani* also accounts of the combats of dwells and push. (Ibid.). P.C. Chakravarti also notices the prevalence of this mode of fight throughout the ancient and early medieval period. (Ibid., p.214).

That the hand to hand fight was also prevalent among the Turks is known from *Fakhr-i-Mudabbir*, who lays down a guideline for fighting such combats. (*Adab-ul-Harb-wa’sh-Shujja ‘at in A.A. Rizvi’s Adi Turk Kalin Bharat* (Hindi), p.272).

45 “पुरुष प्रमाणोलीष्ठम् अबहुजननीवेशम् चरणापस्यस्यवक्तम्।
अप्रोमाणोदङ्गाधिकारः च तत्तेषमाद्य सर्वं स्थाने स्थाव।।”

(*Nitivakyamrita*, p.315, Ch.30, V.118).

required a lesser number of men to guard the camp at night. Simultaneously, it would have also led to the saving of a considerable labour-force for digging entrenchment. The river also provided sufficient water for filling the ditches of moats around the camp.

A sudden attack on enemy taking advantage of his weak position was also a part of strategy. Significantly, our sources did not neglect such an important aspect. Throwing an immense light on it, Kamandaka advises the king “to assail upon the enemy, when his troops are found to be affected by the scorching rays of the sun or by cyclonic storms. He further continues to state that the enemy’s troops wounded or exhausted (in serious combats) in the first half of the day should be attacked for annihilation in the second half (i.e. before they could recuperate), so also those troops compelled to keep awake due to nocturnal raids.” Sukra also lays down for a king to subdue in time the enemy, whose various provisions are scattered, whose corn and fuel is destroyed and whose subjects are incensed.

Rest of the above specialties, the chief military weakness of the Rajput armies was the slowness of their movement, in contrast to the lightning speed of the Turkish militias led by the expert mounted archers. It is true that the Rajput military strategy gave greater importance to weight than to mobility. The absence of practised mounted archery did not allow their horsemen to move rapidly during their attack on the enemy’s troops. Rather, the Rajput cavalrymen used to fight with the weapons of close combat like swords, daggers and spears. Their armies aimed to

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48 Ibid.
49 *Nitisara*, Ch.XIX, Prak 31, p.410, V.68.
crush the adversary’s forces by making a frontal attack, which effected the alertness of enemy and hence a more conspicuous attack from his side. The great Turkish mounted horsemen, on the other hand, could easily, disperse the adversary’s rank by repeated attacks on their flanks. They employed the device of feigned retreat to destroy the cohesion of enemy’s forces. They first harassed the enemy from all sides by light mounted archers, who pretended defeat and flight. This followed by a charge of heavy armoured cavalry. A visible example of such a tactical maneuver may be noticed in the IIInd. battle of Tarain. In the words of Minhaj-us-Siraj, the sultan left “the centre division of the army, the baggage, the standards and banners, his canopy of state and elephants several miles in the rear”. He then advanced in a leisurely manner with the more mobile section of his troops “The light armed and unencumbered horsemen, he had directed, should be divided in to four divisions and had appointed them to act against the infidels on four sides and the Sultan had commanded saying: “It is necessary that on the right and left and front and rear, 10,000 mounted archers should keep the infidel host in play and when their elephants, horsemen and foot advance to the attack, you are to face about and keep a distance of a horse’s course in front of them”.

Remaining at such a narrow distance they could effectively beat the direct breach of the enemy’s blows. The strategy of feigned retreat was also adopted by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq during his campaign of Lakhnauti. It is evident that Haji Ilyas, the ruler of Bengal took shelter in the fort of Ekdala to avoid an open engagement with the Sultan’s forces. He was probably waiting for the rains to come down after which he thought that Firuz Shah will choose retreat. At this moment, Firuz applied the strategy of feigned retreat. He spread the rumour that his army had retreated; hearing which Haji Ilyas came out of the fort to attack the

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rear of Firuz’s forces but was surprised to see the whole army of the enemy in battle formation and ultimately met the defeat.\(^{52}\)

Their strong reliance in mobility of arms and troops, besides their remarkable skill in planning a campaign with strategic and tactical modes was indeed a great steward in their success. Unlike, the Rajputs they could shot arrows meticulously on the target from a mobile horseback without halting or dismounting. Their horsemen were highly celebrated for their softness and speed in both attack and retreat.\(^{53}\) Their mobile capacity did not provide any opportunity to the enemy to neutralise a forceful attack on their forces. They did not believe in a concerted action and an united march, instead they often like to get scattered and then to return to the fights and face the enemy by turning away.\(^{54}\) They thought it less creditable to retreat than to pursue.\(^{55}\) They utilised their speed in attacking the flanks and rear of the enemy and surrounding him from all sides.\(^{56}\) Their forces were generally arranged in to five sections i.e. right wing, left wing, centre, advance guard and reserve forces, on the battlefield.\(^{57}\) *Masalikul Absar fi Mamalikul Amsar* of Shihabudin-al-Umri accounts thus about the disposition of Mohd. Bin Tuglaq’s army on the battlefield, “the Sultan stands in the centre and round him the religious men and men of letters. The archers are in the front and in the rear; the right and left wings were

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53 Alluding to the significance of mobility as an adamant feature of the Turkish armed forces. R.C. Small Writes, “ It enables them to remain at a distance from their enemy and to choose the moment at which they could close with him...... If a change essayed against them, they were ready to retreat, if the attempts were given up, they themselves attacked once more” (R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare*, Ch.IV, p.78).

54 R.C. Smail, op.cit., p.78.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., p.79.

stretched so that the two wings of the army are joined. Before him are elephants covered with iron harness and carrying towers in which the soldiers are hidden.... In front of the elephants are slaves, who march in light armour with swords and weapons. They make way for the elephants..., while the horsemen are on the right and left wing. The flank of the army surround the enemies and fight round the elephants and behind them a fleeing man does not find a cave or an entrance. And, hardly can one escape from them because encircling troops surround them and arrows and naphtha come from the above, and the footmen snatch them from below. So death comes to them from every place and the misfortune surrounds them from every side". The arrangement of these forces was further altered in accordance with the strategical disposition to be followed in the ground. In case of an offensive action the cavalry was placed in the front. For breaking the enemy's line of defense and for protecting the armies from enemy's attack, the elephants were placed in vanguard. Circumstantially, the elephants were also placed in front of the centre. Alauddin Khalji had placed them in front of every division. Sultan Mohd. Bin Tughlaq also kept the elephants covered with iron harnesses with howdahs on their backs carrying warriors in front of himself. Brave vainglorious soldiers in most cases were posted on the right wing and the expert archers on the left. The king rested in the centre surrounded by senior generals and other officials. The reserve forces were kept away from the main army to be entered in battle at a suitable moment for providing a final blow to enemy's forces or to assist

59 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
any particular wing at a critical moment. Though, the ancient Hindus were not unaware with the methods of retreating attacks, they felt themselves handicapped in the field of mounted archery, which hindered them to mobilise their forces like their adversaries.

The wisdom of the Turks in the tactical war was indeed far ahead than the Rajput’s who believed in the open field warfare in most cases. The Rajputs violated the principals of strategy and made tactical blunders; while not trying to take the advantage of the enemy’s weakness. For example, after the 1st battle of Tarain Prithviraja III allowed the defeated Muslim army to return unmolested to Ghor. “Mohd Ghor on his return to Ghor made sleep and rest unlawful to him and prepared with his whole strength for a second war”.

Prithviraja’s forces on the other hand lost thirteen months in siege of Tabarhindah, remaining unalert to the enemy’s second attack. Again, he had committed a great blunder by promising a safe excuse to Ghori on the condition that he will return to his own country. Firishta inform us that on reaching Lahore, Muizuddin sent an officer calling upon Prithviraja to embrace the Muslman faith and acknowledge his supremacy.

Prithviraja who was already on the battlefield of Tarain with a force of “300,000 horses, 3,000 elephants and considerable infantry”, wrote back to Sultan, offering to do him no harm if he chose to return to Ghor, but threatening him with a complete ruin otherwise. According to Firishta, the letter of Prithviraja contained the following matter, “to the bravery of our soldiers we know you are no stranger, and to our great superiority in number, which daily increases, your eyes bear testimony... It were better then, you would repent in time of the rash resolution you have taken, and we shall permit you to retreat in safety; but if you have

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64 Tabakat-i-Nasiri, see Supra, p.215, Adab ul Harb, A.A. Rizvi, op.cit., p.265.
67 Ibid., p.98.
determined to brave your evil destiny, we have sworn by our Gods to advance upon you with our rank breaking elephants, our plain-trampling horses, and blood thirsting soldiers, early in the morning, to crush the army which your ambition has let to ruin". At this Sultan sent a strategic reply by writing back, “I have marched into India at the command of my brother whose general I am. Both honour and duty bind me to exert myself to the utmost.... but I shall be glad to obtain a truce till he is informed of the situation and I have received his answer”. The conditional proposal for piece was replied positively by Ghori in a strategic manner, which relaxed the Rajputs, ultimately, relinquishing all the fresh preparations for war. But the revelrous night became an eternal gloom for them as at the same night “the Sultan made preparations for battle.... and when the Rajputs had left their camp for the purpose of obeying calls of nature, and for the purpose of performing ablutions, he entered the plain with his ranks marshalled”. The defeat of Prithviraja in a state of sudden night attack by Ghori’s forces is also confirmed by both the contemporary Muslim and Hindu sources. Jami-ul-Hikayat of Mohd. Ufi states that the Ghori Sultan in order to prevent any suspicion kept “fires burning all the night, so that the enemy might suppose it to be their camping ground. The Sultan then marched off in another direction with the main body of his army. The infidels saw the fires and felt assured of their adversaries being encamped there. The Sultan marched all night and got in the rear of Kola. At dawn he made his onslaught...” The stratagem played by Mohd. Ghori on Prithvaraja is also confirmed by Prithviraja Prabhandha which refers, “Prithviraja had been asleep.... In the meantime, the

69 Ibid.
70 Tarikh-i-Firishta, quoted by Raverty, Tabakat-i-Nasiri, Vo.I, p.466, fn.1.
72 Ibid., p.198.
Prime Minister had the Sultan sent for”.

Prabandhcintamani of Merutunga also affirms that “Prithviraja was asleep at that time after breaking his Ekadasi fast”. The sudden night attack on the enemy was certainly a part of the strategy of Turks as Fakhr-i-Mudabbir refers to the attack on an enemy in a state of unawareness, as one of the artful methods of war. He suggests the afternoon in the summer and early hours of morning in the winter as ideal time for surprise attack, during which period the guards are usually asleep and the security is disturbed and neglected.

Ibn Battuta accounts of a surprise attack on the Hindus of Ma’bar when their soldiers were taking rest after lunch and their horses were left for feeding grass. Remaining unconscious of the enemy’s attack at that time, they guessed them as thieves and came outside of the fort unprepared for war. Thus, the Hindus met a terrible defeat at the hands of Turks.

The fortal system of the Rajputs was also a severe pitfall in their strategy. They could use the forts for the purpose of defence and not for an offensive attack. The forts built by the Sultans of Delhi on the other hand were offensive in nature. Unlike the Rajput fortresses constructed on the top of hillock, they were built at ground level to facilitate the movement of cavalry. The expansionist policy of Delhi Sultans was greatly served by their forts, which were utilised by them as base-camps. They succeeded to a great extent in their distant campaigns on account of the established chains of the fortal settlements from where the expeditions were organised and the communications were maintained. The offensive nature of the Turkish forts

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73 Prithviraj prabandh in Puratanaprabandhsangraha, S.J.G., p.87.
74 Prabandhcintamani, S.J.G., p.144.
75 Adab-ul-Harb-Wash-Shujjat, A.A. Rizvi, p.262.
76 Rehla, A.A. Rizvi, Tuglaq Kalin Bharat, I, p.296.
77 When Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq sent his son Ulugh Khan for the conquest of Telingana AD 1321, the fort of Devagiri was utilised by the latter as base-camp from where he carried out the campaign. (Futuh-us-Salatin, pp.603-606). Mohd. Bin Tughlaq made Lahore his base camp for the campaigns of Kalanaur and Peshawar. (Ibid., pp.649-650). He had also made Daulatabad as his base for suppressing the rebellion of Sayid Ahsan Shah. (Rehla, Eng. tr. Mahdi Husain, pp.100-102).
may clearly be seen in their gateways, which are found built at quick intervals to facilitate the movement of the troops.\(^{78}\)

The Rajput fortresses, even on being insurmountable became the targets of the enemy’s attack and ultimately conquered by his forces on account of their extensive isolation and dislinkage from the neighbouring fortresses. Hence, the enemy felt it easy to concentrate his target on one fort and to capture it by all possible means. It was the result of the maintained self sufficiency of the Rajput forts that during an investment, the enemy could easily capture the whole fort by cutting of the convoy. When, the provisions stored in the fort came to last, the fort was ultimately surrendered to the enemy. The mighty fort of Ranthambhor could be captured by the enemy owing to the famine prevailed inside.\(^{79}\)

Further, the great indiscretion of the Rajputs could be noted during the hour of a forceful attack on Jalor by Alauddin’s forces. As *Kahhadade Prabandha* accounts that when the combined forces of the Rajputs marched into action and encountered the enemy at the order of Kanhadade and when the Rajputs got the upper hand in the initial stage of the battle with the Muslims, the two Generals, Jaita and Mahipa, who were commanding the war, left the detachment of 4000 Rajput and rushed to Jalor to inform their overlord the news of victory.\(^{80}\)

The Muslims at last, opened the siege of the fort through a stratagem.\(^{81}\)

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78 See *Supra*, the Chapter on Fort and Fortresses.

79 Amir Khusrau who was probably an eyewitness to the capitulation of the fort informs us that, “Famine prevailed to such an extent within the fort that they would have purchased a grain of rice for two grains of gold but could not get it. The fire of hunger had roasted their hearts within their earthen bosoms and they wished to open their bosoms and eat up their roasted hearts. Man can bear all afflictions except that of a starving stomach” (*Khazainul Futuh*, tr. M. Habib, p.40).


81 Ibid., Canto IV, p.89.
It has been observed after the above survey that in most cases the war stratagem of the Turks was more practical and tactical. The Turks made strategic use of forts as long it was required. They had also taken the step to wage open field war too, whenever it suited them. Though, it may be remarked that the Rajputs of our age were fully conversant with the principles of strategy. They accomplished it to a great extent on their Indian adversaries. Yet, in lack of effective cavalry and mounted archery, they failed to apply it successfully on the highly expertised Turkish strategists.